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1917?

By
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Tribune

(Continued.)

There was a small door there, which was promptly opened by a janitor. "Can I get into this building?" Jim asked him.

"What office are you connected with, sir?"

"S. D. Marlett, the insurance office on the third floor."

The man stepped back. The reply seemed to be exactly what he expected. "Mr. Marlett's up there now. You know the way, sir?"

Jim stepped in, his blood beating hot through him. A light, probably turned on for Marlett, was burning over an iron stairway which went up beside the elevator shaft. Jim ascended slowly and cautiously, but in the slightest marble vailed building his foot-prints echoed again and again. He stopped at the landing, and, taking his revolver from his pocket, he felt of the backs of the door to make certain that all chambers were loaded. He gained the second floor. He found in the dim glow of a single electric bulb the stairway to the third and began to ascend. Halting at the landing and listening, he made out no sound from the floor above, but from below he heard the echo of voices and now the noise of a door being hastily ascending the stairs. One of the men below was the janitor; the other, evidently, the man for whom the janitor had mistaken Jim, the one whom Marlett had expected to follow him into the building. That man knew that some one had asked of him had asked for Marlett's office.

Jim gained the third floor and slipped down the hall to the right. It was all dark about him now, as the light on the stairs was around the corner, but the office from which the glint of light had shined to the street must be close ahead. Jim, holding his revolver ready in his right hand, felt the door about him with his left. They were of the ordinary type, with ground glass in the upper half just above the lock. As he moved along, with the sound of the footsteps of the man following closer each moment, he formed his plan swiftly. There was no time for him to delay or to get help, if anything was to be done there it must be done at once and by him alone. Marlett's coming to the office at that time in the morning could mean only one of two things—either the chief of the regent's spies knew that his office was suspected and he had come to remove or destroy all evidence concealed there, or at the moment in which America was arousing to war he had come there to set in motion some prepared plot against the security of the country.

CHAPTER V.

The House of Secret Agents.

JIM'S heart beat so that the blood in his throat seemed choking him. His hands were cold and wet, but steady. There was no light at all inside the doors before which he had halted, but now he had come to an office where some one was working. There was the barest sound of movement and a low light. Some closely shaded desk light probably gave the faintest glimmer through the frosted pane of the door. Jim no sooner discerned this than his finger tried the doorknob. Finding the door locked, he struck instantly with the butt of the revolver, smashing a hole through the glass. He struck again, smashing the hole larger, and thrust his arm in, turned the knob on the inside, jerked his arm out, kicked the door open and sprang within and crouched with revolver ready.

Between his first smash of the glass and before he made the hole larger light had glowed through on his hand. If he had not been sure of that he now might have believed he had broken into an empty room. It was absolutely black and silent. Curtains pulled close over the windows shut out all but a feeble reflection of light from the street, and there was no sound of any sort in the room or in the building. The noise of footsteps following up the stairs had ceased. The man in the hall either had halted at hearing the rattle on the door or else was creeping, as Jim himself had crept, silently down the corridor.

A flash of flame almost in his face, so close that the powder stung his cheeks and the fumes choked him—firing him back of his balance. He fired back—that is, his finger jerked on the trigger and his revolver roared after the other, but the bullet could have found no mark. He recovered himself, crouched, fired again—blinding or only in the general direction of the flame which had burst at him. The flash of the other revolver spurted again, but it did not stun him so much this time. It was something else striking him a second or so after the shot—something which bruised and stung him with its first shock, with his next knocked him down, and with his third a blank.

He was lying face downward upon some sort of a leather couch when he became conscious again. There was a tremendous pain in his head, and when he tried to move his hands he discovered that they were tied to his body and bound to his body. These discoveries brought him sufficient memory of the struggle and gave him

such realization of his present condition that he made no move after the first, which told him that he was securely bound. He made no outcry, and after his first look at the black leather couch upon which he lay he closed his eyes again and lay as inertly as possible.

The smell of strong tobacco, of the sort smoked in a pipe, was the first sensation which gave him knowledge of his surroundings. The smoke was thicker at one moment than at another and thus told Jim that the smoker was then in the room. He was sitting—or standing—quite still, for, though Jim listened intently, he heard no sound but the puff at the pipe. The denseness of the smoke indicated that the room was small, and as Jim ventured to peer above the edge of the couch he discovered that to be the fact.

Before he observed these details Jim had supposed that he was a prisoner in the office into which he had broken or elsewhere in the office building—perhaps in some basement room. Now he recognized that he must have



He Smashed a Hole Through the Glass.

been taken when unconscious to some house of the better sort.

The pipe smoker, who appeared to be acting as a guard, sat at the head of the couch so close that the smoke from his lips blew hot against Jim's cheek, but he was so placed that Jim could not see him without moving. Jim continued careful not to betray consciousness, and the next minute he was rewarded for his caution. A step approached the door, and as the door opened the smoker stood up. A man—plainly the superior of the guard—entered the room and stopped beside the couch.

"He's not conscious yet?" he said impatiently to the guard, who now had ceased to smoke.

"No, sir; not a move yet," the guard replied with deference.

The "sir" put his hand upon Jim's shoulder. It was a strong, firm hand and gripped with determination. It shook Jim back and forth and then let go. Jim had let himself lie as limply as possible and had made no resistance to the shaking.

"You must try again to revive him, Bole," the "sir" directed. "If whiskey and water do not bring him about do anything else."

"Yes, sir."

"Try at once. He"—this did not refer to Jim; it plainly referred to some one in authority over the "sir" and whose wishes were to be obeyed—"must know within an hour, certainly, how he"—this referred to Jim—"learned."

The "sir" went out and shut the door behind him. Bole again puffed at his pipe, but he also poured water into a glass. He added liquor and carried the glass to the couch. Jim still lay as he was left, on his side. He managed yet to feign stupor, though the blood was pounding within his brain and tingling in his neck. He had just



Jim Leaped Upon Him.

received the answer to the enigma which had bewildered him since he had regained his senses. He had just heard the explanation of the puzzle as to why he had not been shot after the fight in the office and left there.

The reason that the spies had taken him prisoner and carried him away was that he had shown that he had learned certain of their secrets. If they had killed him or left him in the office building their act would have operated only to direct more attention toward that office, and they would have lost all opportunity to trace through him the location of the fault in their chain of secret agents. With Jim a prisoner and in their power they could force from him—or apparently they were determined to try to force from him—what he knew about them and how he learned it, so that they might mend their chain where it was broken or at least take precautions against the break bringing greater danger to them. Till they could discover where the fault was it was plain that they must move with extreme caution and at too great risk.

Jim's teeth clenched and his hands strained as he recognized this situation. Bole brought to his lips the glass of whiskey and water. He forced a

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little girl, Jim's heart and dashed more over his face.

Jim succeeded in still feigning stupor. Bole rolled him over on his face and undid the cords which bound his arms, seizing Jim's wrists and moving the arms to stir Jim into life.

The door of the room was shut tight, and as no sound came from other parts of the house Jim felt assured that a little noise would send no alarm to other rooms. As Bole rolled him over with arms loosed he still lay limp; then, as Bole bent over him, Jim caught a loop of the rope which had bound him and threw it over Bole's neck. The man leaped back in his first start of surprise and so drew the loop tight. He did not cry out at once, and as Jim leaped upon him and drew the cord tighter and tighter about the man's neck Bole now could not cry out. With his breath stopped he did not fight effectively. He struggled uselessly to seize the noose with his fingers and tear it from his neck till, with mouth gasping open and bulging eyes shut, he crumpled.

Jim pushed him down on the couch and swiftly searched his pockets, finding first a revolver. In another pocket was a large handkerchief. Jim stuffed this cloth quickly into Bole's mouth, and, securing it there, he loosed the noose about the man's neck. Bole's breath returned in loud, rasping snorers. There was no way to stop the snoring but to remove the gag. Jim dared not do that. He worked swiftly, binding Bole as he had been bound and, in addition, securing him to the couch. The man was conscious again, though weak and breathing hard. Jim delayed over him no longer. He switched out the light, stepped to the window, pulled back the shade and peered out.

A man suddenly moved out into the moonlight as Jim was putting his hand to the window—a young, active man, alert and watchful. Some noise in the alley seemed to have attracted his attention, for he stepped quickly to the gate and before opening it drew a revolver and held it ready. Another man appeared from the other side of the house and joined the first. Together they investigated the alley, closed the gate and withdrew to the seclusion of the shadow.

Jim moved away from the window. Opportunity to escape through the house could not be worse than the risk of attempting flight, through that window. He felt his way to the door without again turning on the light. He stood and listened there, opened the door a crack and peered into a handsomely decorated, dimly lighted hallway with polished hardwood floor and with a rich oriental rug down the middle.

Enough light glowed in from the hall to show Jim that he was in the dining room—a large room with heavy, fashionable furniture. The rug upon which he stepped was soft and thick. There was another door at the other end, and as Jim crept cautiously toward this he heard voices. They were the voices of women as well as men, speaking in quiet, guarded tones. In the air was the odor of cigarettes and cigar smoke.

Lord Shaughnessy, president of the Canadian Pacific railway, denied that he had any intention of resigning as head of the railroad.

A draft for \$17,170 was received by Major Frederick Cringer, quartermaster at Camp Whitman, to pay off the Third Infantry, N. Y. N. G., now at the camp after serving on the border.

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